**Move to allow intrusive development of the Agricultural areas of the Sonoma Coast**

**By Reuben Weinzveg**

In a quiet effort to rewrite the Sonoma County Local Coastal Plan - Agriculture element (LCP), the Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD) has been revising the ordinances that have protected the coast for decades, and would open the floodgates to development.

The new plan amendments will totally undermine the safeguards offered in the current General Plan by suddenly allowing permitted development of industrial winery/event centers on what are presently purely agriculturally-zoned lands on the Sonoma Coast. Much like the effect of the cumulative impacts that currently negatively affect areas like the Dry Creek Valley and Valley of the Moon, the Sonoma Coast is the next development target by the wine industry. The PRMD has stated that it is merely making the LCP provisions compatible with the General Plan 2020. However the Coast is not the inland area, and needs different protections, not provided for in the General Plan 2020.

With the onset of warming temperatures inland, the Sonoma Coast is the new target for winery/event center development and widespread planting of cooler temperature varieties such as Pinot and Chardonnay grapes.

The coastal land rush seems to have already begun. An investment group led by Flanagan Vineyards owner (Windsor) bought a 300 acre parcel near Bodega (part of a 500 Ac parcel, Platt Vineyard, which was listed for $19.5 million complete w/ 8,000 SF!! Estate home).  The vineyard is part of the Sonoma Coast American Viticultural Area. First the vineyard (yes, this is Ag, and we don’t have a problem with that beyond the monocrop aspect, removal of Oak, Fir, Pine, Redwood and all other native biota), but next we can expect winery buildings, bottling plant, visitor parking, commercial kitchen, new wells into the aquifer, wastewater treatment, event parking, traffic, alcohol impaired drivers on narrow coastal roads.

Under the guise of protecting agriculture on these coastal properties, the wine industry is aiming to open the doors to unrestricted development on the coast. Only a huge outcry from the public may be able to stop the powerful wine lobby from achieving this goal, and we won’t be able to rely on our Supervisors or the PRMD to help get the word out on the destructive impacts on both the environment and the communities that live respectfully with each other on the coast.

Neighbors to Preserve Rural Sonoma County has posted copies of the related proposed amendments and further details of the impacts on its web site at <http://preserveruralsonomacounty.org/>

It will be up to each person with any interest in our beautiful coastline to write your supervisors and the PRMD to demand a more open community process with respect to this important proposed amendment. This means more meetings for our coastal neighbors with this element being the main subject of discussion.

It is time for informed citizens to speak up now; please send your comments to all our supervisors, the Permit and Resource Management Department (email addresses on preserveruralsonomacounty.org web site) and to the California Coastal Commission (ethan.lavine@coastal.ca.gov ) to voice your concerns about the future of our coast.